

NATIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGAL SERVICES

WORKING TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED JUSTICE OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
VICTIMS/SURVIVORS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

12 November 2013

RESPONSE TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL QUENTIN BRYCE'S CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The National Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS) Forum welcome the comments made by Governor-General Quentin Bryce in the weekend's Boyer lecture condemning family violence in our community and the chronic under-resourcing of support services.

"We join with the Governor-General in calling for a broad national discussion about the realities of family violence in our communities and the urgent need to address it," stated National Convenor, Antoinette Braybrook.

"Finally the devastating impacts family violence is having on our communities, and especially our women and children is being acknowledged," said Ms Braybrook.

Aboriginal women experience disproportionately high rates of family violence and are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence-related assault than other Australian women. Family violence has wide-ranging negative impacts on Aboriginal women, families and communities. Experiences of family violence are a recurring factor in child protection interventions, physical and mental health problems, and in Aboriginal women's imprisonment rates.

"We know from the statistics that rates of family violence are increasing, but instead of adopting a holistic, targeted strategy, governments are cutting our funding and restricting our services. It is disappointing that the focus is not on access to justice and the safety of our women and children." Ms Braybrook said.

The Governor-General in her speech highlighted the appalling stories of violence she heard in her travels around Australia. "The failure of governments and society to act perpetuates the disadvantage, marginalisation and racism experienced by Aboriginal women and children," said Deputy National Convenor, June Oscar AO.

"We are calling on governments to take up the Governor-General's challenge and join with us to address it through the funding of Aboriginal controlled legal services, refuges, family support and prevention programs. Self-determination is critical – we need to give power and responsibility back to Aboriginal people who know what works in their own communities," said Ms Oscar.

The National Forum invites Aboriginal leaders including Warren Mundine and other members of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Committee to work with us to recognise and prioritise this national crisis.

Media Contact: Antoinette Braybrook, National FVPLS Convenor (03) 9244 3333

Media Release